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Allegations Soviets Using Slave Labor

Heat Up Debate Over Pipeline to Europe

By STEVE MUFSON

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

France and West Germany have launched official probes of charges that the Soviet Union is using political and religious prisoners to help build the natural gas pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe.

While trying to persuade the Reagan administration to lift the U.S. embargo on equipment for the pipeline, the two nations last week instructed their Moscow embassies to investigate reports of "slave labor."

The moves appear to be in response to domestic criticism of the project on a human-rights basis.

Two weeks ago a member of the West German opposition party, the Christian Democrats, demanded that the West German government investigate allegations of slave labor being used on the Soviet pipeline.

A press conference for European journalists held in Washington by Sen. William Armstrong (R., Colo.), who aired charges about conscripted Soviet labor at a committee hearing last month, was widely reported overseas. And a West German human rights organization has appealed to both Germany and France to halt the project.

"The European governments have characteristically avoided looking at human-rights violations in the Soviet Union," said an official of the State Department's human-rights division. He said the U.S. is "encouraged" by the probes and is also investigating. But, he added, "We'd be surprised if enough public pressure built up to influence the European governments to change their position."

Furthermore, he said, it was unlikely that the West German and French embassies in Moscow would be able to find any evidence to prove or disprove the charges.

The U.S.S.R. Embassy in Paris has denied the charges, condemning them as propaganda aimed at sabotaging East-West cooperation.

But the issue isn't likely to vanish soon. A group called the International Society for Human Rights, based in Frankfurt, West Germany, will issue a 60-page report this week containing four letters written by prisoners in the Soviet Union and testimony by four former prisoners currently living in the West. The report will charge that as many as 100,000 prisoners in camps in the Soviet Union, including thousands of religious and political prisoners, are doing heavy work such as cutting down forests and leveling land in preparation for the pipeline.

According to Human Rights Internet, a monitoring group in Washington, the International Society for Human Rights was founded in 1972 by a group of Soviet emigres. The group has been vehement in its criticism of the Soviet Union.

Not all human-rights organizations concur that the Soviets are using prisoners on the pipeline project. Amnesty International in London, for example, which monitors human-rights abuses around the world, says it hasn't received any reports of political prisoners being for

The West German group charges that there are eight labor camps along the pipeline route including Ustj-ischim, Urengoy, Surgut, Tavda, Tjurnen, Irbit and Lys'va.

The human-rights group also alleges that the prisoners suffer from poor working and living conditions and inadequate nutrition in an area where temperatures drop to as low as 50 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Furthermore, the group continues, there are frequent job-related injuries and no medical treatment is available.

"After World War II, German officers were convicted of war crimes on the basis of their participation in slave labor camps," says Dr. Reinhard Gnauck, a physician at the German Diagnostic Clinic in Wiesbaden, West Germany, and head of the human-rights group. Now, he said, Western countries would share "moral responsibility" for Soviet labor camps through their financial and technical aid to the natural gas pipeline. "If people in Western Europe are going to warm their feet or cook their food with that natural gas, they should know that others had to die, work, go hungry, or freeze to get the gas from there to here," Dr. Gnauck said in a telephone interview.

The group says the prisoners forced to work on the pipeline include dissident psychiatrist Semyon Gluzman and a Ukrainian writer, Zinovii Krassinski. But Cathy Cosman, staff researcher of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (the Helsinki Commission), says Dr. Gluzman and Mr. Krassinski are believed to be held in areas or camps that would make it impossible for them to do pipeline construction work.

She says she "can't believe the Soviets would be dumb enough to use political prisoners for pipeline work" because of the political harm such reports would do. She added, however, that she didn't doubt that nonpolitical prisoners were working on the project.

In a broadcast Aug. 5 in Finnish, Moscow Radio called the charges "false." The broadcast said: "Is it even conceivable that the completion of the Siberia-Western Europe gas pipeline would be made dependent on so-called political prisoners? Not to mention the fact that there isn't a single person in the Soviet Union who has lost his freedom for political reasons."

Moscow Radio added that "the real builders of the deal of the century are free people—construction workers, engineers and scientists."

Western experts on the Soviet Union have long assumed that the Soviet Union would turn to conscription of labor for work in the harsh Arctic regions of the country for the pipeline. Such relatively inexpensive labor is considered a major reason why the pipeline will be economically viable. Usually the bulk of pipeline construction costs, especially in remote areas such as Siberia or Alaska, stem from labor costs.

Many experts have said, however, that the Soviet Union would turn to its huge standing army to help build the pipeline.

Appear to Win Backing in Italy

By DAVID FLEMING

Special to THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

ROME—Italian Premier-Designate Giovanni Spadolini appears to have the political backing needed to rebuild his five-party government coalition, which collapsed on Aug. 7.

The unexpected turnabout in the Italian political outlook results from Mr. Spadolini's presentation of a 10-point plan for institutional changes in Italy's parliamentary system. The plan, currently under examination by constitutional experts of the various political parties, has received preliminary approval from the members of Mr. Spadolini's old coalition.

Mr. Spadolini's hopes of succeeding himself as premier had appeared doomed last Tuesday when Italy's Socialist Party said it wouldn't rejoin his five-party coalition. The Socialists are the key party in any Italian government formula; though they control only 9.8% of the vote, they hold a balance-of-power position between the Christian Democrats and the Communists, Italy's two largest political parties.

Rule Changes Proposed

Mr. Spadolini's new proposals appear to have Socialist approval. The proposals include rule changes to reduce the use of secret ballots in Parliament, a limit on the number of amendments that can be added to the annual federal budget bill, a probable increase in the number of signatures required to call a national referendum, currently 500,000, and time limits for the passage of new laws to speed up the legislative process.

A key point in Mr. Spadolini's new plan is the proposed change in parliamentary procedures that permit secret balloting. The issue of the secret vote helped bring about the collapse of the Spadolini government earlier this month. A Socialist bill calling for early payment by oil companies of a tax on refined oil products was defeated in Parliament on Aug. 4 in a secret vote. The Socialists subsequently resigned from the government coalition, accusing their coalition partners, the Christian Democrats, of having secretly voted down the bill in deference to oil company interests.

Currently, Italian parliamentary voting can be forced out in the open only by making the issue a question of confidence in the government.

Socialists' Willingness

The Italian Socialists' apparent new willingness to go along with Mr. Spadolini surprises most political observers, who believed the party was determined to force the dissolution of the Italian Parliament and bring about early national elections—presumably in hopes of substantial Socialist gains. The next scheduled national elections don't come until spring 1984.

Consultations are continuing among the Italian political parties, and decisions are expected soon on whether Mr. Spadolini's plan for a new government is definitely acceptable to the members of his old coalition. In a sign of confidence that the current gov-

ernment crisis is President Sandro Pertini's holiday had Italian government.

Mr. Spadolini is mediating between the Socialists, a member of Italy's which has only 3% was originally chosen in the midst of a Communist stalemate.

If Mr. Spadolini's new government could last 42nd government since

Australian Likely to Pledge And Wider

Special to THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

SYDNEY, Australia—The budget for the current year will provide tax cuts, but and thus widen the deficit.

Most political analysts are forecasting that the year that began Jan. 1 equivalent of \$1.7 billion earlier.

The wider deficit from the government's narrowing deficits and spending. But Canberra represents an economic recovery. Meanwhile, speculation that the budget for next year—will be followed by a call for an early general election. Minister Malcolm Fraser's National Country Party is expected before

Denmark 1983 Budget At Record

Special to THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

COPENHAGEN, Denmark—Social Democratic government expects to post a record, Finance Minister Danneberg said in the Danish parliament.

The minister estimates the gap at the equivalent of \$22 billion, or \$13.5 billion.

Mr. Heinesen said the government was considering the possibility of a wage increase in 1983.

The government is also planning to increase the number of years, Mr. Heinesen said.

Norway's Whole Oslo, Norway—The price of oil has risen 1.5% from the previous year, the Norwegian Bureau of Statistics said.